

## What Children Are Generally Like

Your knowledge of typical child development is the starting point for offering a responsive program. Every stage of development is an exciting period of growth and learning. Think about a 2-year-old in your program. She loves opening and closing cupboard doors and insists that you read *Goodnight Moon* to her a dozen times in a row. The 4-year-old in your program enjoys using paper, markers, and crayons. Knowing that these are typical behaviors enables you to respond in meaningful and appropriate ways. The *Creative Curriculum for Family Child Care* illustrates various ideas and strategies by giving examples that involve the seven imaginary children who are introduced below.

### Infants (Birth–18 Months)



**Jeremy** is 8 months old now and has been in family child care since he was 6 weeks old. He has just learned to crawl and is beginning to pull himself up to a standing position. He loves playing peek-a-boo and laughs heartily whenever you uncover your face. He babbles constantly, saying, “Da-da-ba-ba,” and experimenting with other strings of sounds and with various intonations.

Babies must have their basic needs met by adults they can trust. Once their basic needs are met, they become eager explorers who use all of their senses to examine objects within reach. They are fascinated by people and soon learn to smile and interact with them. As babies learn more about people and as they handle objects, they acquire new skills.

Knowing what infants are like will help you to meet their needs and nurture their development and learning. The chart below lists some of the major aspects of infant development and indicates how this knowledge supports you in planning a responsive program.

#### Aspects of Infants’ Development

#### How to Use This Knowledge

Aspects of Infants’ Development	How to Use This Knowledge
<i>Socially and emotionally, infants...</i>	<i>As a provider, you...</i>
depend on adults to meet their basic needs (to be fed, kept dry, kept warm and cool enough, kept healthy, put to sleep, picked up, held, cuddled, played with, and comforted).	respond to each child individually, building the child’s trust and sense of security. Once babies trust you, they feel safe to explore the environment.
form strong attachments to the important people in their lives.	offer consistent, responsive care for all infants. Children who are cared for and nurtured consistently are more likely to feel confident and become independent.

## Aspects of Infants' Development

## How to Use This Knowledge

like to watch other children and be part of the action.

talk about what other children are doing: “Tamika is beating the drum. We can do that, too.” Include infants in activities, such as finger painting with pudding while other children are using paint.

*Physically, infants...*

*As a provider you...*

explore and move by rolling over, sitting, creeping, crawling, pulling themselves up, cruising, and walking.

arrange floor space so that there is a large space for babies to move about freely and safely. Provide sturdy furniture and railings so they can pull themselves up.

are developing small-muscle skills such as touching, grasping, patting, and grabbing.

provide opportunities for infants to develop a pincer grasp (holding objects with the thumb and index finger) and other small-muscle skills.

*In terms of language, infants...*

*As a provider you...*

understand many words long before they can speak.

talk to babies, sing with them, and read to them throughout the day. Their brains are primed for learning language, so talk and encourage their attempts to imitate speech.

communicate first by babbling and through gestures and facial expressions and then by speaking.

respond to babies' gestures, smiles, and coos. Start a “conversation” with them, even if they only respond with a smile or a coo.

begin to learn the names of objects in their environment.

encourage children to repeat speech sounds and words as you converse.

*Cognitively, infants...*

*As a provider you...*

use their five senses to explore the world.

make sure that the infant toys and objects in your home are safe to be mouthed, squeezed, shaken, and tossed.

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